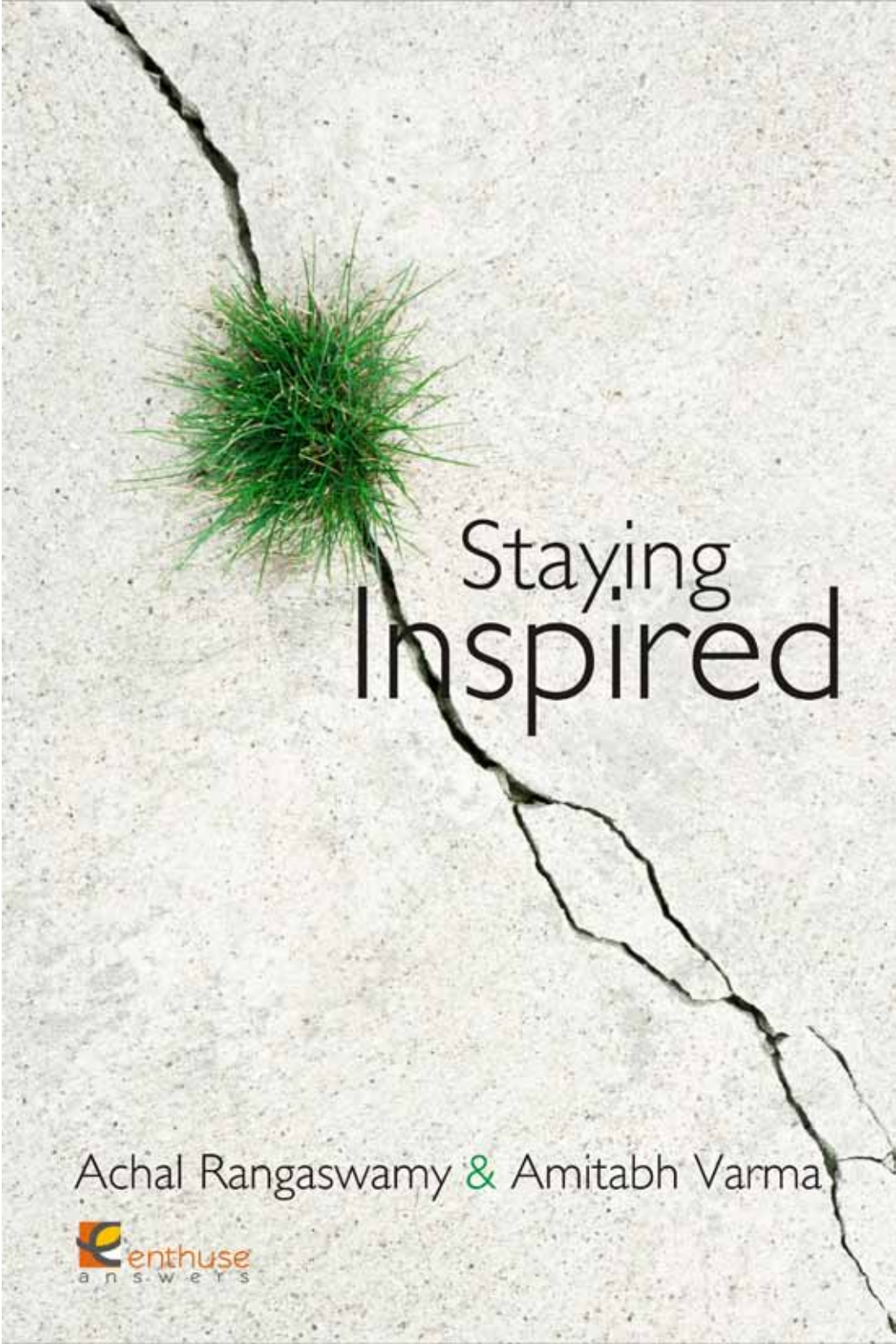
Staying
Inspired
Achal Rangaswamy & Amitabh Varma
enthuse
answers

## Staying Inspired

Achal Rangaswamy, a marketing veteran in his fifties, shares some of the most effective ways of overcoming difficult situations and emerging out as the winner. He learnt these from the real-life experiences of the septuagenarian SN Mishra in an extended chat on the Teachers' Day in 2012. If you, regardless of your position and vocation, find the going hard, read on. These simple, uncomplicated and proven ways can be of immense use to you!

## From this book...

... No matter how massive the opposition may appear, if you do not allow it to cow you down, you can win. My bravado or courage was not premeditated. I had been pushed into a corner, and was left with no choice but to respond with guts, sheer guts. And it worked.

A laidback attitude may be fine, but succumbing to pressure is a different matter altogether. Show of courage, or flying in the face of unfair authority, has almost cost me my job a number of times. But so what? Why should one go down without a fight? Let your brand equity be that of a man who cannot be mowed down!

Published by :

enthuse answers

www.enthuse-answers.com

ISBN 978-93-5126-690-7

₹ 200

Achal Rangaswamy & Amitabh Varma

Staying Inspired

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## Achal Rangaswamy

A Post Graduate from Delhi University and an alumnus of the prestigious St Stephen's College, Achal Rangaswamy is a Sales and Marketing Professional by vocation.

He loves music, writes on varied subjects like sports, music and travel; and loves to talk to young students who are preparing themselves for corporate life.

He has authored two books, 'Time is Money' and 'Beyond the Uncharted Landscape' - a holistic approach for building a fulfilling career.

He lives in Ahmedabad with his wife and son, both authors.

## Amitabh Varma

Once a radio anchor, an All India Radio newsreader and news editor, a radio and television scriptwriter, and a drama artist – Amitabh Varma finds writing an excellent way to relax. He has authored more than 300 short stories, poems, songs and plays, most of which have reached you over the radio or the television.

An engineering graduate from IIT Varanasi, he acquired professional and management qualifications and went on to serve companies such as Ingersoll-Rand and Kirloskar Copeland before settling down with Bharat Fritz Werner.

# Staying Inspired

Achal Rangaswamy

&

Amitabh Varma

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First published in 2013 by
Enthuse Answers Communications Pvt Ltd
Z 35, Phase II, Okhla Industrial Area
New Delhi
PIN 110020
Telephone: 91 124 4271000-02
www.enthuse-answers.com
E-mail: atulchabra@enthuse-answers.com

₹200
ISBN 978-93-5126-690-7

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Editor: Achal Narayanan
Final Version: SN Mishra

Cover design by
Enthuse Answers Communications Pvt Ltd

*Dedicated*

*to those, who find a solution in every problem*

*and*

*to those, who find a problem in every solution!*



# Introduction

The world is unfair!

When results fall short of expectations, disappointment sets in and the feeling of having been treated unfairly surges within.

"When I was so fair, why were the others unfair to me," you ask, discouraged.

How can you stay inspired with so much of injustice around?

There is another way of looking at the situation. Just as you are fair from your point of view, the other person could be fair from his point of view. How about changing the other person's point of view, and achieving greater success?

This book is a compilation of experiences where the other person's point of view was successfully changed, and success was grabbed from under the nose of failure.

These actual, real-life experiences were narrated to me over long sessions by the machine tool stalwart and the then Vice Chairman of Bharat Fritz Werner Limited, Mr Shailendra Nath Mishra.

Mr Mishra is credited with transforming an old-world, brick and mortar machine tool builder into a modern, nimble-footed, global corporation that is a market leader in India – raising its turnover from ₹15 million to ₹7,850 million. He set an industry trend by recording the highest-ever exports to USSR, overcoming crippling labour strifes, developing a wide range of over 300 products, and acquiring companies abroad. Mr Mishra was also the trendsetter at the Indian Machine Tool Manufacturers' Association, putting the Association's finances in great shape, solving crises astutely, inculcating the style of consensus building, and popularising the strategic importance of India's machine tool industry.

How did he manage success where others had seen nothing but failure?

Read on. It will help in staying inspired.

Achal Rangaswamy





# Preface

Mohammed Rafi! Other than on this page, you will not find his name anywhere in this book. Yet, the popular playback singer is linked to this book.

I like Mohammed Rafi songs. My wife says that I sing his songs well. But then, she must praise everything I do. If she does not, I invite a debate, and prove that what I did was indeed praiseworthy.

Anyway, interest in Mohammed Rafi it was that drew me to a Rafi fan group on the Web. Rafi was equated with God, his songs were lauded sky-high, his virtues were disseminated, till a day came when little was left on the topic.

Some members retired, some went in hibernation, and some started a barrage of jokes. Yours truly went somnambulant. I read some of the messages, deleting most without reading.

Except for messages from two members. One was dead serious, factual, an authority on Rafi. I wonder how he amassed so much information about the singer.

The other member wrote small, interesting, original and very readable messages. This member was honest to admit that, though he admired Rafi, he respected other singers and artistes as well. He was interested in moulding the youth into a force that would propel the growth of India in the right direction.

I started reading his messages on other sites – they all pointed in the same direction. This fun loving man was dead serious about shaping the future of India.

One day I picked up the phone and called him. He talked as if we knew each other for decades. From Rafi to singers, from songs to lyrics, from lyricists to literature, from books to his books – it was natural that after covering so much of ground we would talk about the next project.

That was how Achal Bhai and I conceived 'Staying Inspired', which is before your eyes now.

Hope you like it!

Amitabh Varma





# Prologue

At first sight, he is a soft person. Soft, extremely polite, almost apologetic, unassuming. The demeanour sheathes an extraordinarily tough man underneath. The toughness rises to the surface the moment he begins talking. His gaze never misses anything, his expressions never carry any unintended insinuation.

His razor-sharp memory does not allow any detail of vital importance to be overlooked. His repertoire of memory is full of intellectual, spiritual, literary, management, and humorous anecdotes.

He is a great storyteller. On occasions, he is known to have kept people spellbound for hours.

The voice is tremulous. The hands, at times, appear to tremble. But when he begins to talk, he is a young, childlike, eager

raconteur.

Nestled in a corner of the quiet, well-manicured, dignified office at the plant, his own dominion sits pretty. Books line up quietly behind him. Each book bears signs of having been gone through several times, put back every time for later reference. All the titles are awe-inspiring.

His desk is not bare. But it surely dispenses with clutter. Every object seems to occupy its own position and space. Nothing is out of place.

The window is open to let the Bangalore monsoon breeze waft in. It does, but with a careful air, almost as if seeking his permission.

He receives me warmly. I bask in the warmth throughout our 45-minute rendezvous. I am informed later that it is unusual for him to grant so much time to anyone. I consider myself privileged.

Over unsweetened black tea we talk. He is a great listener too, and it comes across very clearly that he appreciates intelligent listeners.

He also acknowledges a good point made and mentions it gracefully. Traits of a good leader, I note.

And this is how our discussion begins, about the long innings of a great leader who inspires by staying inspired.





# 1

# The Origins

*I have met him once before, but that was in his office. There is not much difference though, except that he looks a little more relaxed than he did when I met him the first time, about a month back. He sits in the patio of his bungalow amidst a lot of greenery, and the first thing that strikes me is his fondness for blue-coloured clothes. He wears a blue T-shirt with jeans, and looks quite prepared for a long chat.*

*We start talking about early days; in fact, very early days. The story is pretty engrossing, going as far back as the Anglo-Sikh war, when Punjab fell to the British.*

*A very good host, he carefully pours an exclusive flavour of tea in my cup, suggesting how to savour it best by avoiding sugar and milk. He does not sit back and relax until I have a bite of a homemade snack. I marvel*

*at these telltale indications of his fine upbringing and pride in his lineage. He pauses for a moment, gathers his thoughts, and begins the story of Jhalla Pandit and Maharaja Gulab Singh of Jammu & Kashmir.*

The Anglo-Sikh war saw the defeat of the Sikhs, and the death of many brave warriors. Maharaja Gulab Singh, one of the generals of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, emerged a recognised leader.

Maharaja Gulab Singh sensed that the battle-scarred East India Company had reached the brink of impoverishment. It needed a huge influx of funds to keep going. Maharaja Gulab Singh saw a chance and decided to strike a deal. He offered the cash-strapped East India Company a grandiose sum of ten million rupees! The amount was large enough for the Company to get tempted.

In return, Maharaja Gulab Singh demanded the territory to the north of Lahore and Sialkot, painting it as rather modest, uninteresting, difficult, barren and hilly. The bargain offered by Maharaja Gulab Singh was music to the ears of the Company. Maharaja Gulab Singh would not only get what he wanted, but the British would also declare and recognise him as the ruler of Jammu & Kashmir!

Though Maharaja Gulab Singh offered ten million ru-





pees to the East India Company, in reality he did not possess that kind of money. He could barely manage only half the amount. But he was in luck. He could borrow the balance amount from his wealthy friend, Jhalla Pandit.

The money was exchanged, the treaty was signed. Maharaja Gulab Singh became the king. Only a small hitch remained – the equal stake of Jhalla Pandit in the kingdom due to his contribution of five million rupees. Maharaja Gulab Singh was not one to share his kingdom with anyone.

Jhalla Pandit and Maharaja Gulab Singh started for Jammu & Kashmir on horseback. The long, arduous journey under the harsh sun had a telling effect on Jhalla Pandit. He became thirsty. He suggested stopping for a while to take rest and find water to quench thirst. Maharaja Gulab Singh declined.

As the journey progressed, Jhalla Pandit's thirst and weariness kept increasing. Maharaja Gulab Singh remained relentless. He kept on refusing all of his friend's requests for stopping over, no matter for whatever brief period. God knows for how long this continued, but it turned Jhalla Pandit so exhausted and desperate for a drop of water that he could not control himself at the sight of *paniharins* (water fetching women) fetching water from the next well. Ignoring Maharaja Gulab Singh's warning, Jhalla Pandit dismounted the horse,

longing for a refreshing sip of water. He formed a cup with his palms, brought his mouth near it, waiting for the *paniharin* to pour water. I am not sure what happened first – whether it was water that fell into his eager palms, or it was Maharaja Gulab Singh's sword that severed his head – but Jhalla Pandit and his claim for an equal share in the kingdom were gone for ever. From now onwards Maharaja Gulab Singh was the uncontested King!

The royal court of Maharaja Gulab Singh had an extraordinary astrologer, Pandit Harkishan. Once Maharaja Gulab Singh was travelling by boat. The boat was sailing smoothly over the Jhelum. Suddenly, it stopped. No matter how hard the sailors rowed, the boat would not move an inch. Pandit Harkishan was accompanying the king. It did not take much for the venerable Pandit to realise that an idol of Lord Gajadharji buried under the river was behind the stoppage. The boat would move only after the idol was retrieved! He shared his findings with Maharaja Gulab Singh.

It was strange, yet was a possibility! The Maharaja ordered his divers to check and report. The divers returned with a beautiful idol of Lord Gajadhar. The boat resumed its journey.

Lord Gajadhar's temple was set up on the banks of the river in accordance with Pandit Harkishan's advice. An impressed Maharaja Gulab Singh appointed Pandit





Harkishan as the royal astrologer. His razor sharp and accurate predictions often left Maharaja Gulab Singh perplexed.

One day Maharaja Gulab Singh brought Pandit Harkishan in front of a mare. The stunningly beautiful mare was pregnant. Maharaja Gulab Singh challenged Pandit Harkishan to examine the mare, study the astrological charts, calculate, and predict whether the foetus inside the mare was that of a colt or a filly. Pandit Harkishan calculated, and told Maharaja Gulab Singh what his findings were.

The matter should have rested there. After all, it was only a matter of days when the mare would give birth. But Maharaja Gulab Singh was made of a different mettle. He could go to any length to serve his motive, whether it were something as serious as removing a claimant from his kingdom or as simple as testing a Pandit. He ordered the soldiers to cut open the mare and examine the foetus. There it was! Pandit Harkishan was correct once again.

Pandit Harkishan was shaken. He was being admired for the accuracy of his predictions, but had the prediction gone wrong, perhaps Maharaja Gulab Singh would not have thought twice before ordering his execution.

Pandit Harkishan took leave to set out on a pilgrimage. He left for Kashi with his entire family. It was a real

pilgrimage. There was no fear of falling prey to the manipulations of the mercurial Maharaja.

Maharaja Gulab Singh was the ancestor of Maharaja Hari Singh, whom most of us know as the Ruler of Jammu & Kashmir at the time of India's independence.

Pandit Harkishan was my ancestor. He was a Saraswat Brahmin of the Dogra community.

Like his father Pandit Kunj Lal, my grandfather Pandit Chhotu Lal Mishra was a scholar of Sanskrit and Hindi, and spoke perfect English. He published the first Hindi newspaper, *Bharat Mitra*. *Bharat Mitra* was held in high esteem by the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan of Prayag and towering literary figures such as Mahadevi Varma, Pandit Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi, and Pandit Ambika Prasad Vajpayee, in fact whole of the Hindi world.

Children were a little afraid of our grandfather. He loved to read the Encyclopaedia Britannica, and urged the children to do the same. It was available at a princely sum of ₹400. The children were too young to understand the significance of the publication, and often avoided their father by hiding behind curtains! He was gentle with them, but this one habit of his usually kept the children at arm's length from him.

My grandfather was quite wealthy. His property included large expanses of lush green gardens, ponds,





estates, horses, buildings, and what not. His earnings from Raja Katra must have been substantial. This impressively large property was situated on the Mahatma Gandhi Road, then Harrison Road in Kolkata, then Calcutta. It was leased out to my grandfather by the Maharaja of Burdwan, to whom almost half of Kolkata belonged. Apart from his literary pursuits and managing his property, my grandfather traded in textiles, importing them from Lancashire and Manchester. It was a flourishing business.

India was agitating for freedom. Nationalist spirit pervaded all self-respecting patriotic Indians. They looked at Mahatma Gandhi to lead the nation out of British rule. The Swadeshi movement, which called for the boycot of foreign goods, inspired my grandfather so much that he relinquished all his textile agencies. His children followed suit, showing no interest in inheriting Raja Katra.

The *zamindar* (landowner) Mishra family happily abandoned the riches, dreaming of an independent, self-reliant India. Gone was the lavish lifestyle. What was left was a rich heritage of culture, nationalism, knowledge, and education.

My father, Dinanath, completed his graduation and double MA, finally obtaining the law qualification, BL. He became an Advocate. He was the second son of Pandit

Chhotu Lal Mishra. My elder and younger uncles were Harishchandra and Dwarkanath. I also had a paternal aunt, Jayanti Devi.

My aunt was very wise. I loved her a lot. She, too, was fond of me. She would lovingly call me Shail. She made a tremendous impact on my thinking. It is due to her that I believe that formal education is neither necessary nor sufficient to make people wise and intelligent. Some are born with it; some acquire it over time. My aunt, as it was the practice with womenfolk those days, did not possess many formal diplomas or degrees. However, she was a voracious reader, and could finish large volumes of literary work very fast.

I owe a lot to her.





# 2

# The Early Days

*He has been talking for about an hour. Thoughts come naturally to him. There is rarely a need to stop and align thoughts. He does not digress, except to inquire whether I need something to eat or drink. He also informs me about the delicacies he has got specially prepared for my lunch. I feel awkward, but pampering guests appears to be a natural trait with him. He sips some water, and resumes.*

Education, culture, etiquette and manners were of paramount importance to my parents. Mastering the English language was a prerequisite.

Though the Mishra family's ancestral house was at Panjtirthi in Jammu, I was born and brought up in Kolkata. The city boasted of many fancy schools. I went to a

Hindi medium school.

My father and grandfather did not attach much importance to the marks on the report card. The marks did matter, no doubt, but learning was much more important. Education must liberate. It must set the mind thinking. It must give people freedom of thought and expression. Education must empower. Only then can it be considered complete in all respects, they felt. Several decades later, I continue to agree with them.

I loved to study Sanskrit grammar. It was a compulsory subject, and I am glad that it was so. It regularly fetched me excellent marks, placing me comfortably in the first division. Scholastic education those days was influenced by the remnants of colonialism, laced with a love for Sanskrit! I myself do not have a clue as to why I did so well in Sanskrit. I recited Sanskrit *shlokas* (couplets) remarkably well. I could surprise everybody by fluently reciting verbatim a *shloka* that I might have heard for the first time in my life.

I was good at studies, securing the first division in the high school. Extremely fond of reading, I grew up reading stories from the Panchatantra and the Hitopadesh, speeches of Churchill, volumes on history, and works of Shakespeare, Dickens, Hemingway, PG Wodehouse and others. I found the humour of Wodehouse particularly heart-warming.





Classics fascinated me. I loved to quote lengthy excerpts from Julius Caesar and The Merchant of Venice. At the same time, Grimms Fairy Tales and the Arabian Nights also found place in my collection.

I loved poetry. Wordsworth and Shelley were my favourites, but Keats, Tennyson and Byron were not far behind. Among the others, I still remember Song Of A Dream by Sarojini Naidu, Milton's Paradise Lost, Robert Browning's Patriot, Thomas Campbell's The Soldier's Dream, and Coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient Mariner. Among the Hindi poets, Mahakavi Nirala, Sumitra Nandan Pant, and Maithili Sharan Gupta were my favourites. The unique flavour of Urdu poetry attracted me towards the works of Mir Taqi Mir, Insha, Mirza Ghalib, and Zauk. Thanks to my upbringing in West Bengal, I also somewhat understood the nuances of Tagore's work.

Kolkata's famous Maidan was not too far away from our residence, but I found the companionship of books far more engaging than a game of football or cricket.

I enjoyed co-editing the school magazine, *Chhatra Bandhu*. Co-editing also meant canvassing for advertisements. The chief editor was Pandit Vishnu Kant Shastri, who later served some Indian states as their governor.

I wrote my Matriculation examination in 1951, and

passed out in the first division.

My teachers in school, and later in college, were dedicated and good. Education was all-encompassing, and the standard was high. Add to that the atmosphere in my home, which encouraged constant learning. My father, an advocate, urged us to read aloud the daily Statesman, particularly the editorial. This, according to him, was the best way to brush up English. Considering that he was an MA in English and also in History from such renowned institutions as the Scottish Church's College and Calcutta University, he must have had a strong reason behind it. He was truly knowledgeable. He remembered the entire Gita, Vishnu Sahasranamam and Ramcharitmanas by heart.

One fine day my father observed that there were enough general Arts and Science graduates in the world to make a real difference to it. He suggested that I opt for a Bachelor's course in commerce. This paved the way for my studying for the BCom course, beginning my *'baniya'* (business) education!

The natural transition was from BCom to Chartered Accountancy, to pursue which one had to go through Articled Clerkship. The positions were few, the aspirants many. I was academically strong, but was not well versed in the ways of the world. Naïve and yet in my teens, I went knocking on doors, looking for an opportunity. Finally, I landed the





much coveted Article Clerkship at a monthly stipend of sixty-five rupees, to be increased to eighty-five rupees in the second year. That was my first job! My office was on Middleton Row, not far from that famous establishment that has witnessed so much of Kolkata's great history - Flury's, the confectionery and popular eatery at the corner of Park Street, where so many celebrities may have literally broken bread.

Calcutta, as it was called then, thus provided me not only with academic qualifications, but also the stepping stone for my career. You can definitely call me a dyed-in-the-wool Calcuttan!

Coming back to my first apparenticeship, I had my first professional learning there. I realised how bad one feels when a promise is not kept, and what can be the implications of bad professional conduct. It was through my own experience. My employer failed to keep the promise of giving me a twenty-rupee raise after the first year. It was not that he had fallen into bad times, it was just a 'smart' way of doing business. I felt cheated. Disgusted over my employer's lie, I quit the job.

All is well that ends well. I passed out in 1960 as a Chartered Accountant, having written one of the toughest exams I had ever faced. Later in life, travelling on the Kerala highways I noticed a sign proclaiming – Jesus Never Fails. Someone scribbled below, 'Tell Jesus to

sit for the CA exam!'

Of course, the man must have appeared and failed a number of times in the exam to be driven to such a state!





# 3

# Baptism by Fire

*His bungalow has a beautiful pond, from which a bunch of lilies raises its head. The grass is lush green. Birds are chirping. Sometimes one can hear an aeroplane fly overhead. Lunch time is nearing. A cat comes and sits patiently in front of the kitchen door, waiting to be fed. Over another cup of tea we talk.*

Having learnt a sour lesson at my first apprenticeship (articled clerk), I changed my approach to work in the second one. I was brusque, and sometimes afraid that my brusqueness would cultivate enemies for me. But my fear was misplaced. My colleagues were nice to me, like friends. It became famous that rather than wasting time on making notes I straightway presented reports!

The scenario was refreshingly different at my third principal, who was a very soft spoken person. The firm was the regular auditor for Kalinga Airlines, a company owned by the very popular leader and aviator, Mr Biju Patnaik. It was inevitable that I would come in contact with the employees of Kalinga Airlines. And so I did.

Kalinga Airlines' Mr C Balan, an Iyer from Trichur, developed a liking towards me. He saw larger potential in me than that required for auditing companies. He manoeuvred matters amicably and fast, leading to my joining the first company, Kalinga Airlines.

I must admit that Mr Balan knew more about my potential than I did myself. He was a courageous man, and led by example. The founding owner of the company, Biju Babu himself, was admired for his nationalist sentiments and daredevilry.

During the Dutch aggression on Indonesia, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru organised the Asian Conference in New Delhi. The President of Indonesia Soekarno had to be brought to New Delhi. Mr Biju Patnaik landed his aircraft in the Presidential Palace and brought President Soekarno to New Delhi. Mr Biju Patnaik became a close friend of President Soekarno and a great favourite of Pandit Nehru.

The Sino-Indian conflict had left a bitter taste. Kalinga Airlines, with some dated DC3 Dakota aircraft, dropped





the much-needed supplies for the Indian troops near the McMahon Line on the north-eastern frontier. The area was poorly connected through roads. It was next to impossible to sustain the forces through supplies over road.

Kalinga Airlines was not flushed with funds. The airline started defaulting on the payment of dues towards the supply of fuel from Assam Oil Company and Burmah Oil Company. Supplies on credit depended on regular pleading and coaxing. We finally reached a day when no amount of coaxing and pleading was effective. Further supply on credit was denied till Kalinga Airlines cleared the backlog.

We were in a crisis.

Kalinga Airlines had many seasoned officials, but somehow none was willing to bell the cat. We wanted fuel supply to resume, and that too on further credit, but visiting the Assam Oil Co officials and convincing them to agree was too challenging a task to undertake!

The onus fell on me. I gladly accepted the responsibility. I took the Director of Supplies and Transport along, and flew to Dibrugarh. From there, it was a jeep ride till Digboi. The terrain was green and hilly, and the task ahead was daunting.

We met the Marketing Manager, the Accountant, and

the General Manager of the oil company. While I did not expect much leeway from the Accountant, even the Marketing Manager was unwilling to budge till the dues were cleared. These two Scots were nothing in comparison to the British General Manager, who refused every request. It became clear why no one at Kalinga Airlines wanted to speak to these people. They knew they would be unsuccessful, and who wants to be unsuccessful?

I would have to return empty-handed. It would not only be a personal failure, though for an impossible task, but a failure of my employers, and also a failure of the trust of the soldiers who were defending our frontiers without caring for their lives.

I had exhausted all my ammunitions. I then got up showing big disappointment and told them that my all reasonable proposals were rejected. So I had to go. But they should not blame Kalinga if in the next few days the newspapers came out with headlines:

British colonial company Assam Oil sabotages the food dropping operations in Assam and NEFA (Arunachal Pradesh), thus starving Indian soldiers. Parliament would summon the Assam Oil officials and may be nationalise the company.

The threat worked. Immediately the British General Manager escorted me to his office and arranged the





best tea. He returned after forty-five minutes, after convincing his colleagues and announced one month's extension.

I emerged a big winner. Back in Calcutta's Kalinga Airlines' office reverberated - Mishra never fails.

The lesson remains with me. No matter how difficult the task, if you do not allow yourself to succumb to the pressure, you can win! My threat was not premeditated. I had been pushed into a corner, and was left with no choice but to respond with guts, sheer guts. And it worked.

A laidback attitude may be fine, but succumbing to pressure is a different matter altogether. Show of courage, or flying in the face of unfair authority, has almost cost me my job a number of times. But so what? Why should one go down without a fight?

Let your brand equity be that of a man who cannot be pushed down!

# 4

# Facing Obstacles

*He introduces his wife Vijay, who sees to it that I try everything served at the rather elaborate lunch. It is very well made, and I say so. He ensures that the compliment reaches the cook, who comes out and says thanks. I notice that everyone in the house smiles. As if on cue, I smile and get ready for the next session, which relates to handling difficult situations.*

Patience and courage can be tested quite frequently. I have battled many daunting situations which are now difficult to even imagine. True challenge lies in overcoming the worst adversity by using the best opportunity, and growing really well. It makes you and your organisation tough, strong, and a real force to reckon with. It is good not only for the company, but also for the clients, the workforce, the vendors, and the





country – not only of your own, but also the one associated with your organisation. And of course, it is good for ecology and society.

There are numerous lessons you learn from adversity. Especially so when it comes in the garb of business opportunity encumbered with layers of bureaucracy, fine print, and threats!

One such lesson relates to Bharat Fritz Werner, or BFW, which was my second employer. I joined BFW in 1967, and served it for forty-six years without any interruption! This particular incident happened in the early eighties.

BFW came to know about a requirement of 160 heavy duty conventional knee type milling machines in the Soviet Union. BFW was a small company. It did not have even a brochure for the particular product.

BFW learnt that HMT was also interested in the business. The government-owned HMT was the undisputed king of machine tools in India in those days of protected economy. BFW offered the best machines at rock bottom rates, but HMT quoted still lower! When HMT, a well-established behemoth, was offering established machines at a lower rate, who would even look at BFW machines which were still on the drawing board?

The scale of operations was baffling – BFW was

contending for a 70-million-rupee order when its annual turnover was below 50 million rupees! BFW possessed only the barest infrastructure to build the machines, but was trying to secure business where delay in execution attracted heavy penalty. This appeared to be a classic case of biting more than one could chew!

To make the matters worse, the conditions stipulated shipments on Soviet vessels only. Each machine weighed about four tonnes and occupied ten square metre floor space. BFW needed at least 2,000 square metre area, not only secure and weather protected, but also capable of withstanding 700 tonnes of weight!

I was determined to bag the business. The greater became the odds, the higher soared the thrill! It is not that the challenges were only professional, they were of personal nature as well. I was, and continue to be, a staunch vegetarian. I was accustomed to living in a moderate climate. After scanning many 40-page menu cards, I realised that the only vegetarian item was black rye bread with no butter. I had it in breakfast, in lunch, and in dinner throughout the trip, washing it down with black tea. Black tea was the only indulgence possible within my less-than-modest travel budget.

This first experience made me wiser, and on subsequent trips I made it a point to use an immersion heater in





my room for heating pre-cooked packaged meal. I also started carrying bagfuls of snacks like thepla, poori, farsan, etc. The enterprising Gujaratis and readymade food producers made my later travels to that part of the world easier, for which I remain grateful.

But, let me come back to the first visit. If the extreme climate and limitation of food was an inconvenience, the style of negotiation was downright intractable. Cynical, disparaging and discouraging remarks often came my way. It was the trust of colleagues back home that kept me going. They somehow believed that regardless of the obstacles, I would succeed in bagging the business. Amazingly, some comments to the effect also emerged from the BFW workers' union. I could decipher hidden under the ice-cold exterior and the unfriendly stance an exuberant respect for my efforts.

I deliberated with my team on whether going in for the BFW machines was an intelligent proposition. It was true that BFW machines were built with modern design and high quality of inputs. But, being good was proving to be more of an impediment than a virtue with the high associated costs preventing lowering of price. The customer remained adamant on paying the least. Lowering the price would mean inflicting loss of unrecoverable proportions to BFW, which I was not prepared to even consider.

I prepared transparencies on each factor related to the

quality of design and inputs, sturdy castings, heavy-duty bearings, electromagnetic clutches, etc. Computer presentations were not in vogue then. PowerPoint was yet to emrge. Transparencies were projected over a large screen through a contraption called the overhead projector. One had to be careful while placing the sheet over the projector to avoid the display being upside down or as a mirror image. Unless the place was dark, nothing would be visible over the screen. The presenter used to be at a disadvantage, not being sure whether the effort was creating interest or sleep!

The buyer was interested only in knowing the final 'take it or leave it' price. Deciding to take the bull by the horns, I invited the purchase committee to a presentation. In the dark room, I explained how the BFW machine was superior from the angles of design, construction, maintainability and operations, and finally released the ace – I proved that the BFW machine was much more productive! High productivity and lower expenditure requirement on maintenance and operations justified procurement of the BFW machine even at a 50% premium over the HMT product. And, I was quick to demand it!

The lights were switched on. The atmosphere had undergone a sea change. Far from taking the defensive stance and regretting inability to reduce price, BFW was asking for a price higher than it had bid for, put-





ting the customer on the defensive. And, rather than offering the customary *'nyet'* or 'no', the visibly impressed purchase committee was asking about BFW's turnover! I confidently responded, "It should be about 120 million rupees next year!" That left the customer satisfied.

BFW bagged the business!

Back in Bangalore, we were overjoyed and determined. Working capital was arranged, mother machines and facilities were sourced, and the contract was executed perfectly. The customer was happy on finding the product delivering as promised. BFW closed many overseas deals as the result of this first major success.

The courageous shall always continue to inherit the earth.

# 5

# Patriotism

*He normally likes to relax after lunch. But, today is different. It appears that recounting the experience for the benefit of others is infusing energy in him. Tea arrives. The flavour is different. He allows the tea to settle down for some time, delicately removes the tea cosy, checks the liquor, gives an approving nod, and pours it in my cup. I admire the tea cosy. He says he bought it in the USA.*

It is easy to find fault in everything around you. You can either be content crying about the faults, or do something constructive to bring about improvement. For me, patriotism does not end with lighting up candles, fluttering banners, calling strikes, and living with a negative mindset. It lies in finding gaps and closing them in a sustained manner with all sincerity and honesty.





Goods produced in rich and developed nations are presumed to be good. This does not make Indian products bad. Look at the label on the merchandise in malls overseas, and you will notice many carrying the name of India as the country of manufacture. Had the Indian quality really been inferior, so many car manufacturers would not have been scurrying over to India to set up their manufacturing base here. It is unfortunate that many ambitious endeavours in India fail to prosper fast due to a misconception about quality being compromised on all Indian goods.

Let us take the example of Maruti. Till Maruti 800 - the Indian version of the Suzuki car - arrived in India, we had little option but to choose from the Ambassador, the Premier Padmini and the Standard. Maruti Technical Services Private Limited was established way back in the early seventies to provide technical knowhow for the design, manufacture and assembly of a wholly indigenous motor car. Soon, MTSPL gave way to Maruti Limited, and the later avatar was called Maruti Udyog Limited.

Suzuki of Japan held substantial share in MUL. MUL initially used a number of imported components, but was committed to indigenisation. It developed and nurtured entrepreneurs, establishing supply chains in conformance to international standards. MUL insisted upon producing and buying good quality products. Somehow, the philosophy was misinterpreted. It was

felt that while it was fine for MUL to source components from Indian suppliers, it would never buy heavy machinery, including machine tools, from Indian manufacturers.

The year was 1994. I was the President of IMTMA, i.e., the Indian Machine Tool Manufacturers' Association. I knew that Indian machine tools were good, and was committed to promote them. I had personally received many compliments from the overseas users of BFW machines. I tried to test the waters myself, and called upon the MUL Chairman, Mr RC Bhargava.

Mr Bhargava was more than pleased to see me. His opening remarks were, *"Aaiye Mishraji, Bade Mauqe Se Aaye!"* (welcome Mr Mishra, you have arrived at the most appropriate time). I did not find him reluctant or reserved at all.

He had a big shopping list. He wanted to buy about 30 machining centres. I gave him the names of reputed builders of machining centres, and offered all help. Mr Bhargava was eager to know more about BFW products, but my visit as the President of the IMTMA was to promote Indian machine tools in general, not a machine tool builder in particular. I took leave, taking permission to meet him the next week, this time as the President of BFW.

The second meeting was very successful. MUL saw rea





son in buying Indian machine tools, saving precious foreign exchange and time on logistics. By this time the ministry of heavy industries too swung into action. For the first time in history, the so-called foreign-oriented MUL purchased machine tools from Indian companies. It was a proud moment for me to see BFW, HMT and Widia machine tools working in tandem with imported machines on the MUL shop floor. Maruti never repented the decision, and continues to buy more and more Indian machine tools year after year. Even twenty years after our meeting, Maruti remains the passenger car market leader in India, and also exports a number of vehicles to many countries. This is the best testimony to Indian quality.

Self improvement is good, self pity is not. Criticism, if taken positively, can spur you on no end. Many a time I have had to listen to comments like "I thought you would never ever reach here, but you did!" This is an expression of grudging respect. This reminds me of a quote - "To reach places one doesn't even dare to go, one will have to do things one doesn't even dare to do."

Another comment often made before me is - "You will fight tooth and nail for your company." All I wish to say is that people do build homes and offices with the stones that critics hurl at you. It is all about being firm, resolute, and enterprising. Top of all a very positive mind which is unconventional.

The same stands true for nation-building and patriotism.

# 6

# Intellect and Value Addition

*Squirrels play in the garden. The cat, after a hearty meal, has vanished. The Bangalore sun can be harsh, but I feel very comfortable in the patio. A pedestal fan stands behind, but there is no need to switch it on. There is a stone structure next to the fan. I realise that there are several stone structures in the house. I get my next topic, stone!*

Opportunity lies in abundance all around us. One must recognise the opportunity, use intellect, and work out something beneficial. Possession of just the basic skill is not enough. The skill should be supported with *buddhi* (intelligence). Mind scores over body, brain scores over brawn.

Visualise four persons working with stone.





One breaks the stone into small fragments, producing chips for constructing a road. A real hard worker, smeared with dust and sweat, he ends up collecting ₹130 at the end of the day.

A second person chips the stone to get the definite shape of a millstone. He makes a pair of them, both almost identical in size and shape, for use in a primitive kind of appliance. He may perhaps be rewarded with about ₹400 for a day's toil.

Now, let us look at the third person. He uses his imagination, and makes neat pillar-like structures similar to the one you see here. He may invest several days into making one pillar, and get rewarded by a few thousand rupees for his artisanship.

The fourth person is a sculptor. He uses his imagination, his intellect, and his heart to carefully carve a breathtaking statue of mesmeric beauty. His eye for detail and his passion for perfectness do not allow him to stop till the masterpiece is complete. When the unblemished work of art is ready, there is a mad scramble for it. Apart from getting fantastically paid, he receives recognition, finds happiness, and feels proud.

Effective use of brain and available material – is not that what value addition strategy is all about? Value addition is not only functional and tangible, it can be emotional as well.

Consider another example. My watch costs a few thousand rupees. It reads the correct time. Watches available only for a few hundred rupees also read perfect time, and so do watches sold at a few hundred thousand rupees! All read time, but people prefer one to the other.

People pay not only for the ability of the watch to read correct time, they also pay for the value associated with the label.

From the days of my first job, I was attracted by things that were better than ordinary. My first watch was a Tissot. I had heard of Rolex too. In those days, when it came to quality, reliability and popularity, the pecking order was Rolex, Omega and Tissot. But I preferred what I felt suited my personality.

My first pen was a Parker 61, which could fill itself. It remained my companion for a long time. I bid adieu to it when my boss got me a Mont Blanc on his way back from Germany. It had a big nib, perhaps to improve handwriting. My handwriting was not bad, and till today should fall in the 'good' category. Back then fountain pens were in vogue, as ballpoint pens are today.

I do not use a product just to show it off. I like it practical and stylish, but not extravagant or jazzy. When I bought my pair of spectacles, I chose it because of comfort and what it did to my appearance. I realised





only later that it was a Cartier.

What we used yesterday, we may not use today. And what we use today, we may not use tomorrow. Preferences keep changing, and so does the value addition. I attended a Tom Peters seminar at the Mumbai Oberoi in February 1994, and came back convinced that to become a market leader one must be an all-encompassing catalyst of change – change in solutions, change in products, change in processes, change in human resources, change in strategy, and, yes, change even in the leadership style. The message from the market is simple - differentiate or die!

One must be careful while championing the cause of change. Change cannot be thrust abruptly upon people. It must flow smoothly. It should be acceptable.

Xerox, for decades, was the leading copying machine maker. Xerox had become a generic name. Rather than saying, "Please photocopy it," people said, "Please Xerox it!" But one day something happened that took Xerox downhill. Xerox decided to enter the computer market in a big way, banking on its brand recall which was confined to the photocopying segment. The idea bombed. People's minds could not accept a Xerox computer.

Sticking to the core competence is good. Do what you are good at, on what you have always been good at.

Never ever dump that. Modernise in that area, get new methods to do better. Become more efficient, more effective. But do not ever discard your core competence.

Unless you want to go the Xerox way.





# 7

# Leadership

*It is another day, and a different place. We sit in the drawing room. It is comfortable and spacious. And thankfully, it does not look like the lounge of a 5-star hotel. It has warmth and a personal touch about it, just like its residents.*

Once we announced a special performance-linked incentive scheme at BFW. The incentive was payable on meeting production and sales targets.

At the end of the year, the targets were met. We were happy. But then, someone pointed out that the targets were achieved only after consideration of some unexpected business not envisaged originally while framing the scheme.

To a discerning observer, the feat was accomplished with foreign, external and unfair help. Without the unexpected business, the achievement fell short of the target! We were in a dilemma, a *'dharma sankat'*.

I thought. The men had worked, slogged, sweated. They had put in their best efforts, done their bit. The figures were achieved, and were there for all to see.

The brain cautioned against paying the incentive, the heart favoured the disbursement. I decided to go with the heart. Each and every beneficiary accepted the decision with grace and silent thanks for the compassionate stance.

There were so many instances when BFW's technology partners, Fritz Werner, insisted upon buying machinery only from them. They applied all kinds of pressure. They owned substantial shares, and took advantage of that. They had access to latest technology, and took advantage of that as well. My technical team felt that machinery from a different source suited us better. Purchasing Fritz Werner machinery would not have served anyone other than the manufacturers! Under the circumstances, I protected the interest of BFW by repeatedly declining to the Fritz Werner offers and threats, and procured what was right.

Once the leader says 'no', it should remain a firm 'no'. But before saying that 'no', the leader should be sure





about the correctness of the decision. Colleagues in BFW trust that I will never err. If I will err at all, I will do so on the positive side, they believe. By being on the positive side, I do not mean being magnanimous. But I ensure that I do justice to the actual player behind the activity. He may not always be at the front. I identify and reward him. I do not go around pleasing the entire world or satisfying each and every person's every silly wish. Fairness and appreciation of the situation are important to me.

You cannot be a good leader if you are not fair. People trust you only if you are absolutely fair. It is not enough to be respected or loved, the leader must command trust. He should also be sure of his actions and decisions, and he must abide by them.

You must listen to wise counsel. Consultants, coaches, guides, friends, professionals such as auditors, architects, doctors, lawyers – all may have some wonderful advice to offer. However, remember, at the end it is your business, and only you are responsible for it. Someone has to take a call, and that call must be a reflection of an inner conscience. Something that clearly says - "Yes, do it," or "No, do not do it." As Churchill said, "War is too serious a game to be left to the Generals!" It is about being accountable for and to the business. Remember the famous lines - "I am! I can't explain why, but I am!"

As a leader, you must take decisions, put your foot down,

and say no to slavery and sycophancy. You cannot dillydally, you have to be assertive. You have got to clearly say 'yes' when your heart tells you to say 'yes', and you have surely got to say 'no' when you know that the answer is not 'yes'. If the situation is so sticky that you cannot really tell the truth, avoid answering, if necessary. But do not tell a lie. You will get caught. Someone somewhere will surely notice your lie. Your bluff will be called. And with that your reputation will go for a permanent toss. Remember, when reputation is lost, everything is lost.

The leader should not try to be smart. The world today is full of people trying to outsmart others. If you are a real leader, your colleagues will not treat you like a boss. They will not be scared of you, they will be honest with you.

Sometimes too much knowledge slows things down. People point out clauses and sub-clauses, explaining why things cannot be done. I look at the general good that comes out of doing things, and go ahead with decisions and actions that many would stop to reconsider, or ponder over, or not go ahead with.

You can bring fear into people's minds. You can demand respect for a brief period of time. People can love you for a short while. But when all the three combine, and you get respect, love and trust from all quarters with no strings attached, it is a life worth having lived. When





your critics, your opponents, your rivals, and even your enemies exhibit the same feelings, you can happily rest contentedly that you have lived your life well and worked the way you should have.

I treasure this feeling.

# 8

# Environment

*Tea arrives. He stops talking, looks around, and before I can protest, picks up a rather heavy side-table and places it in front of me. "Keep the tray here," he advises the domestic help. He turns toward me, "I thought it would be more convenient for you this way." At his age and stature, display of such hospitality leaves a lump in my throat. Cheerfully, he hands me over a cup of tea.*

Tender coconut water is good not only for health, but also for strengthening relationships! Greenery has a soothing effect. This is true not only for the romantics, but also for diehard businessmen.

You know that BFW follows ethics and always sides with the customer. We try until the last minute to accommodate customers' wishes.





Sometimes the customer communicates through different channels, each channel having its own interpretation - the operations, the maintenance, the designs and the planning departments may interpret the requirement differently. In such cases, building the machine as per the finally agreed requirement may take time, and delivery of the equipment may get extended.

In a similar case, the owner of a company visited us. He was also the President of the Automobile Components Manufacturers' Association of India. It was obvious that his employees had not apprised him about their divergent views that had led to the late finalisation of specifications. He was feeling that BFW had not paid due attention to his order, and was angry over it. He had come to discuss the final delivery schedules.

A fair discussion could be held only if the gentleman dropped his prejudice. If he continued to accuse and blame us, and not realise what had actually caused the delay, he would have pressurised us to commit unrealistic dates. It was necessary that he should cool down and become reasonable.

I welcomed him at the entrance of BFW's administrative block. Immediately, as we shook hands, he demanded, "Let us go to your office and clear this mess!"

I said, "Of course, we will do that. After all, what else I am here for? But before we do that, just look at that side."

I pointed towards a garden. The lush green grass, the bougainvillea exterior, the duranta hedge, and two giant Christmas trees – the view was captivating. As the guest looked for sometime, I suggested, "You know, these two trees are almost as old as BFW is. They have weathered many storms. A particular storm was so fierce that we were afraid of losing the trees for ever. The storm continued a whole night, but these trees held ground, getting slightly bowed in the process."

"Yes, I can see they are bowed. But they are magnificent. How tall are they?"

"About 35 or 40 feet. Let us get closer to them," I answered, leading him towards the garden.

The guest followed me.

"Oh, you also have a pond tucked in here," he remarked.

"The reflection of the building looks marvellous in the pond," I added. He walked around the pond, agreeing with me.

"We have another pond, next to that rose garden," I offered.

"Mr Mishra, we have to talk about the delay in despatches," he reminded.





"Definitely, how can we forget that? But the rose garden is just there, across that small path," I continued. Beautiful roses of all hues tempted him. He walked towards them. He saw the second pond, and the reflection of the azure sky in it. That pond happens to be in front of a temple. It had a sobering effect over the guest.

"Have you seen a sandal tree," I asked.

Most of us have heard about sandalwood smuggling, we have also seen pieces of sandalwood in temples, but few have seen an actual sandal tree. The guest was tempted.

"No, frankly, I have never seen one," he admitted.

I took him to the sandal tree, which was behind the temple. The guest was astonished, it was perhaps quite different from what he had imagined.

"When do we go to your office," he asked.

"Immediately, after you are offered the best treat," I responded.

He was curious, "And what is that treat?"

We walked across the line of avocado, mango, chikoo, papaya, and litchi trees, stopping next to a row of coconut trees. A man swiftly climbed up, dislodged a

coconut, and descended. The coconut was cut in front of the guest, a straw was placed, and I offered it to the guest.

"You know, I did not know that coconut is plucked in this manner. In fact, I am having fresh coconut water for the first time in my life," he admitted, enjoying the treat.

"I am happy that you like it. Should you want, please have some more. And after that we will have our meeting," I reminded him.

"Mishraji, what meeting? I know that you care a lot. Just see that things are in order," he protested.

We held the meeting, I explained the situation to him, informed him about the status, agreed on the schedule. The schedule was met, leaving the gentleman with a very happy memory of his BFW visit.

Later, at a meeting of the Confederation of Indian Industry, Mr Brijmohan Lall Munjal began introducing me to the gentleman. The gentleman was quick to retort in chaste Punjabi, "Who does not know him? He leads people literally up the garden path!" He hugged me warmly, something which he still does whenever we meet.

See, what a wonderful impact nature leaves on us! We





must only have the eyes to enjoy its beauty and the mind to relish its serenity. At one time the BFW facilities had about 30,000 trees. When we sold a portion of land to a neighbouring housing society, rather than haggling on the price, we put a term that none of the silver oak trees should be chopped off. Green foliage continues to mark the BFW front boundary even today. You can still see a gaggle of geese waddling on BFW lawns.

I experimented with organising a board meeting on BFW lawns, under the shade of trees. The Directors sat alongside the pond and discussed. It was so different from the artificiality of holding a discussion in climate-controlled atmosphere with dead paintings hung over the walls.

I am particular about using and treating the bounties of nature. I introduced rain water harvesting about twenty-five years ago. This resulted in an unbelievable rise in the water table in the surrounding area. For twenty-five years not a drop of water has been sourced from the civic administration. Conversion of canteen waste into manure and recycling of waste give me a sense of accomplishment.

Why erect fences and separate, when you can raise foliage and unite?

# 9

# Assertiveness

*I enjoy the minor diversions during our discussion. Vijay, his wife, comes for a small chat with him. Then it is someone else. I also hear a song being hummed. He commands respect, but is not intimidating at all. He is not aggressive, but at the same time is very assertive.*

Assertiveness is a trait necessary to perform and succeed. You need not be intimidating, you need not even be aggressive, but if you are not assertive, you may cause harm not only to yourself but to many others, including perhaps the person with whom you have to be assertive.

According to the Peter Principle, people tend to be promoted up to their "level of incompetence". The same stands true for organisations. Imagine a vast source of





water, say, a river. The water in this river is adequate to cater to the needs of thousands of houses in a city. However, all water must pass through a valve, which is only 25 mm in diameter. What will happen? The city will suffer from water shortage, leading to various kinds of after effects.

Abundant knowledge and resources are available in the world. If the CEO, unfortunately, assumes it to be his responsibility that all the knowledge and resources must be channelised only through him, he will act like the valve in the example above, depriving his organisation of progress. I believe in free, direct and undiluted flow of information from the source to the recipient. This has resulted in some amazing observation! Employees look beyond their sphere of work, willingly assume greater responsibility, and work across functions. The greatest benefit of the concept has been reduction in the number of workmen from 660 to a mere 28!

The CEO is often requested to increase manpower. Manpower is not just a number, it has a deep-seated impact on the working. I never desire to eliminate workers. But I am very particular about selections and appointments at all levels. I am proud to find that my colleagues have been handpicked by modern companies for the positions of managing director and president.

It is not that BFW never faced labour unrest. We have

our share of labour trouble. The issue always had little to do with BFW. Once it was the creation of an ambitious local leader who was seeking an easy route to national politics. The leader thought that strike, lockout, violence, bowing of the management, and acceptance of the demands would establish him deeper in Karnataka politics, catapulting him to the national level. To make the matter worse, this leader's own brother was a cabinet minister in the Government of India, and a fiery press baron was patronising the minister.

A handful of employees started indulging in indiscipline at the behest of the leader. Production started suffering. Talks with the employees revealed that they had no grievance; they wanted to continue working and earning for their families. Less than twenty employees were stopping them from working properly, instigating them to create trouble.

I consulted colleagues. We decided against short-changing customers by falling behind schedule or supplying inferior quality materials, both being certainties under the conditions prevailing. We also decided to not to put other colleagues at risk by exposing them to the errant workmen.

The culprits were suspended.

I could well have detonated a bomb. Outsiders started preventing employees from reporting for work. Fear of





physical assault and arson loomed large. I was asked to mend my ways through different channels. Finally, the leader sat on hunger strike, demanding unconditional withdrawal of the suspension orders.

BFW did not budge from its stance.

One day the BFW Chairman received a telephone call from the press baron. The press baron advised the Chairman to talk to me. If I continued with my headstrong ways, BFW and other companies headed by the Chairman could face trouble, he warned. That was the licence-permit era. The threat, though veiled, was clear.

The Chairman spoke to me. I explained the matter to him. Giving in to the demand meant inviting labour trouble in all companies. A better way was to go the legal way.

To his full credit, the Chairman fully supported me. The employees also supported me.

The leader realised that BFW workers were sincere, performance-oriented, peace-loving, and no chicken. They would not be tempted, cajoled or intimidated to adopt unethical methods. He started sending feelers to reach a face-saving settlement.

To cut the matter short, the matter was taken up to the Supreme Court, which upheld the BFW stance.

On another occasion the employees started working at a different location, producing machines. The efficiency increased! It was proved once again that negative forces do not survive against strong-willed positiveness.

In a separate incident, I came to know about a requirement of 16 horizontal machining centres in the USSR. The specifications were typical, not matching those of the regular Fritz Werner products. We were short of business. I negotiated for five days. We were finally in the sight of the 107 million rupees contract.

There was a hitch, though. The arrangement with Fritz Werner prohibited BFW from exporting machining centres. Since Fritz Werner would in any case not have served the order, it meant letting the opportunity slip. The market in India was bad. I was not prepared to shun business.

I accepted the business, and flew to the Fritz Werner headquarters in Berlin. Even after three days I was unable to meet the two top guys – the CEO and his second-in-command. One was travelling, the other was too occupied.

I had not committed treason. I had acted in the best interest of BFW, which had a turnover of only 82 million rupees at that time, and had built only a single machining centre till then. BFW did not have the resources, but had the will. The resources were with Fritz Werner.





I was determined to put my views across to Fritz Werner, work together, and serve the order.

More than a month passed. Finally, the Managing Director of Fritz Werner gave the appointment. The instructions were precise - he was to be met at a particular address in Paris only at 10 am, after which he would proceed to the Caribbeans on a holiday.

The MD knew about my acceptance of the business, and must have been livid. Nothing but fireworks was expected at the meeting.

We arrived a day ahead in Paris. The precise nature of the appointment had made me cautious. Trying a dry run, I hired a cab to go to the location. It appeared like an endless journey, taking hours to reach the destination over a circuitous route.

Wise with the experience, I started early the next day, directed the taxi driver, and reached the destination at 9.30 am. I had a suitcase full of documents.

I hauled the suitcases to the lift, and then to the venue. The MD was surprised to see me, "I thought you would never make it," he gasped. The discussion started.

He was angry but not insane. He read the documents, listened to me, and realised that had the business not been taken by BFW, it would have been grabbed by the competitor.

After more than three hours, he was convinced that I had done the right thing by clinching the business.

He surprised me by asking, "If this were the matter, why didn't we talk earlier?"

I responded, "You were too busy. And in future, if a similar situation arises and you are again too busy, I will do exactly as I have done this time. I will bag the business."

He laughed, saying, "I like that!"

The ice had melted. Fritz Werner provided BFW with all help, and the order was served in a nice manner.

An 82 million rupees company executed a 107 million rupees order, because someone had been assertive.





# 10

# Mind Games

*He does not speak immediately. He observes for a while, and then begins in a tone that may be entirely different from the last time and from your expectations. He is a mind reader, an accomplished player of mind games.*

The ordinary human mind does not grasp raw facts and data the way it records perceptions.

Those were the days of the Bharatiya Janata Party rule. My friend and eminent industrialist Dr Sudarshan Maini asked me to attend a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) meeting. The RSS Sarsanghachalak Mr KS Sudarshan desired to meet representatives from the industry, Dr Maini said.

Those familiar with the RSS would know that its cadres

wear *khaki* shorts and white, half-sleeved shirts. I wore a nice business suit, complete with a necktie! I stood like a sore thumb in the gathering.

In chaste Hindi I paid my regards to Mr Sudarshan and his colleagues Mr Rajendra Singh *alias* Rajju *Bhaiya*, Mr Mohan Bhagwat, Mr HV Sheshadri, Mr Anant Kumar, Mr Venkaiah Naidu, and the other dignitaries.

Their eyes were glued on me, waiting for me to begin, perhaps expecting something that would be in contrast with the RSS ideology, as projected through my attire. I started in chaste Hindi then sought permission to speak in English!

Permission granted, I proceeded, "The RSS membership is about 7.5 million. I am confident that the cadre is honest and dedicated. RSS is the first one to help in crises and calamities. RSS does commendable work. RSS maintains the high tradition of preserving values and serving the motherland. The question is, in spite of doing so many good things, does RSS today enjoy the same high image in the mind of the common man as it did in the times of *Parampujya* Madhav Sadashiv Golwarkarji?"

The audience fell silent.

I added, "To the best of my knowledge, the image has suffered".





Murmurs arose.

I continued, "Does the issue not deserve to be examined in a *chintan baithak* (meeting)?"

I had either continued for too long, or had perhaps touched some raw nerve. A signal to wind up came.

I requested, "Sudarshanji, if a little more time is allowed, I will also provide you with the solution to the issue."

Permission granted. I suggested, "Let RSS senior office bearers select a thousand top-of-the-line dedicated workers. Let these workers be trained thoroughly for a year about the modern world – the economy, world affairs, Kautilya's *Artha Shastra*, and how to usher India ahead in the modern times. They should learn how to sustain values and yet bring about change. The Hindu ideology supports change – *Bramha* creates, *Vishnu* maintains, and *Shiva* destroys – the whole cycle reflecting constant creation and re-creation. What comes, goes. The Sanskrit word for the world, *Jagat*, means *'Jaayate Gachchhati Iti Jagat',* meaning one which is born and goes away is *Jagat*."

They looked very interested. I added, "Similarly, the body or *deha* is described as *'Dahan Yogya Iti Deha',* or one that is combustible, is the body! One should not worry about what dies. One should worry about what

comes back with change."

The hidden messages of gaining deeper knowledge of the modern world and our own culture, avoiding attention to superficial appearances, and bringing about a change in the image were conveyed though my western disposition and deeply Indian speech. Bowled over, the audience probably arrived at the intended conclusion that it was the orthodox image and outlook that needed to be changed.

*Mens sana in corpore sano,* the famous Latin saying means that a healthy mind resides in a healthy body. But there is a catch! What is it that makes the body work like this? It is the mind! The mind scores over the body. It makes the body work even when it is not inclined to work. The mind must be kept healthy and active, and must be served enough fuel to keep working!

Once a famous management guru was invited by a leading glass-bottle manufacturer. The reason was obvious – finding a way for all-round improvement.

Top managers, including the Chairman and key industry mandarins, packed the hall to capacity.

After the introductions, the guru dropped a bombshell! He asked, "Mr Chairman, what business are you in?"

This question not only shook up the Chairman, but also





rattled the others. How come the guru did not know such a basic fact? The Chairman controlled his emotions, and replied that he was in the glass-bottle manufacturing business.

The guru exclaimed that the actual business was not glass-bottle manufacturing but something else! The audience stared at him in disbelief.

A little more probing, and then the guru explained – so long as the company felt it was in the glass-bottle manufacturing business, it would block everything beyond that. However, improvements would come only if the boundaries were demolished and the thinking expanded. Could the company be limiting itself by thinking that it was in the glass-bottle manufacturing business, while actually it was in the business of making containers - containers of many kinds, big and small, glass or metal or any other material? Anything that needed to be 'contained' was a business opportunity, and the avenues for growth and improvement were immense!

A similar concept saved the sagging fortunes of the American Railroad Company. Rather than confining to railroad, the concept was widened to transportation. Anyone who needed to travel from one place to another was painted as a likely prospect, irrespective of the mode being rail, surface, water or air.

I agree with the saying that the businessman has

little alternative but to predict the future. If one just sits waiting for things to happen, one would be mowed down by the tides of time.

The human mind is like a parachute. It works only when it opens!





# 11

# Education

*It is time for another delectable lunch. I am informed that he is no novice in cooking – even 5-star chefs appreciate his suggestions. Whether it is salt, oil, spices or rice, he can educate you authoritatively about all. I like the food, basking in the care.*

Tea can be made in many ways. And, it can be spoiled in many more ways!

I am very fussy about the ingredients and the process. Today it can be lemon grass, tomorrow ginger and cardamom, the day after a combination of cinnamon and cardamom, and some days later aniseed and cardamom.

I like Darjeeling tea - second flush. At times I mix very little Assam tea in the Darjeeling second flush. The Sikkim

second flush is excellent. Whatever be your choice of tea, make sure that it is made with care and love. It should never be as bitter as poison, or as cold as ice.

Even tea sets cause a difference, as do presentations. I remember my father always saying that good chinaware imparts good taste to tea.

I love talking with the youngsters over a cup of tea on the lawns. Many of the youngsters are pretty keen to learn and try new ideas, willing to adopt and implement change.

Mr Suresh Krishna, the scion of the TVS family, is someone whom I met often and who had some very interesting things to share. He said that one day someone asked him how he managed to keep deputing his employees to various programmes and training sessions overseas. The man enquired whether the practice was not too expensive, a big drain on the company's assets?

Mr Suresh Krishna's response was simple, "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance!"

A fable I heard from Mr Krishna was about a king who was preparing his sons for succession. When they came of age, the king decided to test whether they were ready to shoulder greater responsibilities. He sent them to a Guru who sent them to a forest and report what they see and hear.





The sons visited the jungle, and informed the Guru that they heard the roar of the lion, the cries of the smaller animals, the twitter of the birds, the howl of the hyena, sound of thunder, etc.

Not satisfied, the Guru asked the sons to go back and pay deeper attention.

The sons were amazed by their experience the next time. They reported noticing the first ray of Sun caressing the blades of grass, the mountain spring flowing with a musical tinkle, the twig cracking with a pop, and the soft sound of grass as it bowed under their feet.

The Guru was satisfied. The children were now ready to shoulder greater responsibilities. They were able to hear what was audible and also what was not audible; they were able to see what could be seen and also what could only be perceived.

Talking of knowledge and the use of it, just look at what the famous quality expert Deming did to Japan. We all know how Japan immensely benefitted from Deming's knowledge and teachings.

Education does not end with simple reading. One must have good thoughts and do good deeds. It does not end with *chintan* (thinking) and *manan* (reflection), but extends to *acharan* (conduct).

Let us look at it from a simple perspective – it is nice to be important, but is it not more important to be nice? Or look at it this way- we spend our lives thinking, worrying, doing. But what about observing the rules of life? The rules of *Dharma*?

The second chapter of *Gita* conveys - think about what you need to do. Instead, man focuses on everything else.

Light-hearted films such as *Padosan* and *Golmaal* had some great scenes. I found *Umrao Jaan, Gujarish* and *Sardari Begum* very interesting, and so were Roman Holiday, Come September and Casablanca.

Music can be a great healer, especially vocals by MS Subbulakshmi, Girija Devi, Malika Pukhraj, Begum Akhtar and Pandit Jasraj.

Man can get education from everything around.





# 12

# Customer Care

*He stops and asks whether I would care for a cup of tea. I feel pampered. Barely an hour ago I was served an exquisite lunch, and here I am already being asked for a cup of tea! It would be impolite to say no, but actually I would prefer to skip it for the moment. He reads my mind, and smiles, "Maybe later?"*

He was at least half a metre taller, and a metre wider on the shoulders when compared to me. He would have weighed at least half a quintal more than I did. He was a guard, and the problem was that he appeared to be very much interested in me.

My fault was that I had dropped a vegetable burger on the squeaky clean floor of Chicago's McCormick Place. McCormick Place is a huge convention centre, housing

many eateries. These eateries serve delicious food, most of which, unfortunately, is non-vegetarian. Vegetarians like me have to be either satisfied with fruits, or hunt for a restaurant also selling vegetarian fare.

After a lot of research spread over several floors, I was able to spot a McDonald's restaurant serving vegetarian burgers. The place was overcrowded; one had to go outside and eat. I had a bag in one hand. With the other hand I balanced the food tray with the burger, the French fries and the tall glass of coke. Naturally, all my attention was focused on the food tray, when someone gave a shove. In spite of all my acrobatics, the burger landed on the floor, getting unwrapped and dislodging its contents in the process.

I was not in a position to pick it up and deposit it in the trash can – doing that would have further imbalanced the tray, and God knows what more would have fallen.

I slowly proceeded to a table, placed the tray and the bag over it, and was wondering whether to clean the mess first or eat whatever was left of the lunch.

That was the time when I caught the eye of the guard.

He snarled, "Hey!"

I was afraid. He appeared to be a brutally strong hard task master.





He challenged, "Hey, you the guy who dropped that burger there?"

I mumbled my agreement.

He snapped, "Go and take another!"

Surprised, I tried to protest.

"No, no, nothing happen to your bag or food. Go and take another," he insisted.

Finding me a little confused and reluctant, he took me to the McDonald's counter, jumping the queue, and announced, "He the guy whose burger dropped."

'Pop!' Another tray appeared in my hand, with a complimentary burger in it!

Decades have passed, but I have not been able to forget that experience.

Many a time I have returned material at malls in the USA and in Europe, and have been promptly compensated with a replacement or a refund, no questions asked!

A leading manufacturer of automotive brakes and clutch systems in South India had a number of BFW machining centres. Once something went wrong with

a machining centre, and the production was interrupted. The BFW engineer was quick to check, but realised that the offending item needed a major overhaul, which was possible only at Bangalore.

When the information reached the factory chief, he lost his cool. He was in no mood to lose the production for four or five days, assuming the time taken in the overhaul and transportation. He called me up, stating how a breakdown would play havoc at the factory.

I assured him of all help, requesting him to pass on his worries to me.

The part was removed, loaded on a car and brought to the BFW factory in Bangalore. All parts and facilities were already arranged on the basis of the report of the engineer. It was almost like a heart surgery! The moment the part was hauled into the BFW factory, it was opened up, cleaned, repaired, closed and tested – all in a matter of less than six hours. Thanks to the grittiness of my colleagues – they did not bat an eyelid, sat in the car again, and started the return journey.

I am told that they did not rest till the part was mounted back on the machine and production was resumed. When the factory chief came for his evening round, he was pleasantly surprised to see the machine performing to its full might.





I need not tell you how much repeat business we got from this customer! The particular gentleman makes it a point to visit us at every IMTEX.

If you can, pamper your customer so much that he becomes incapable of thinking of anyone else. If you cannot, be prepared to lose him.

# 13

# The Final Countdown

*In a modern auditorium, five eminent personalities sit on the dais. The master of ceremonies requests the Eicher Group former Chairman Mr S Sandilya to open an envelope and read the name of the winner of the Lifetime Contribution Award 2013. Mr Sandilya announces the name: "SN Mishra!" Mr Mishra walks up the dais, receives the award, and stops to say a few words to the audience. It is the inaugural function of the international machine tool exhibition IMTEX 2013 in Bangalore.*

It is a great honour, personally to me and to Bharat Fritz Werner Limited, to be awarded the IMTMA – BFW Lifetime Contribution Award 2013 in memory of my dear friend, the late Shri HR Gupta. This award was instituted some years ago. Receiving it was a great feel-





ing, it made me humble.

I received the award in my long career in the machine tool industry. I saw a lot of changes occurring in these years – plenty of coolant flowed, a tremendous amount of energy was consumed, and tonnes and tonnes of metal were converted into chips! While a lot has been done, much more still needs to be done. A lot has changed, but much more yet needs to be changed. As they say, *Picture Abhi Baqi Hai Dost* (the motion picture is not yet over)!

I would not have been able to receive the award without the complete support and understanding of my wife Vijay and sons Sanjay and Vivek, who put up with my long hours of work and very frequent travels.

I am grateful to my brilliant colleagues at Bharat Fritz Werner for their dedicated support, guidance and complete trust in me. They have been of tremendous help to me in implementing constant, unorthodox and many a time totally unconventional changes.

I owe a big debt of gratitude to my colleagues in IMTMA, specially the world-class Secretariat, the Past Presidents and the committee members, who always stood by me with their guidance and support.

My successes have been possible because of the complete trust and freedom I enjoyed from the very

respected and beloved Chairman of Bharat Fritz Werner, the Late Shriyut Giridhar Dasji Kothari.

I have received, and continue to receive, support and encouragement from Bharat Fritz Werner's youthful Chairman, Shri Arun Kothari, Director Shrimati Prabhavati Devi Kothari, and their illustrious son Shri Anand Kothari.

After reaching one of the many milestones in his career, cricket maestro Sachin Tendulkar was once asked, "Are you happy?" He is reported to have replied in the affirmative.

He was further asked, "Are you satisfied?" He reportedly said, "No!"

There can be no comparison between Sachin Tendulkar and me. But, if asked the two questions, my answers would also be the same! It is true that I ushered BFW from the ₹15 million bracket to the ₹7,835 million league. This was achieved without a penny of additional investment from the promoters. I am convinced that with acquisition of technology, BFW can be a ₹25,000 million player in another three years. BFW has a vision of being among the global top twenty players by the year 2020. The final countdown has begun.

I am sure success will once again prove to be a faithful partner!

(Clockwise from left) A young Shailendra, parents Jamuna Devi and Dina Nath Mishra.

## Memorabilia

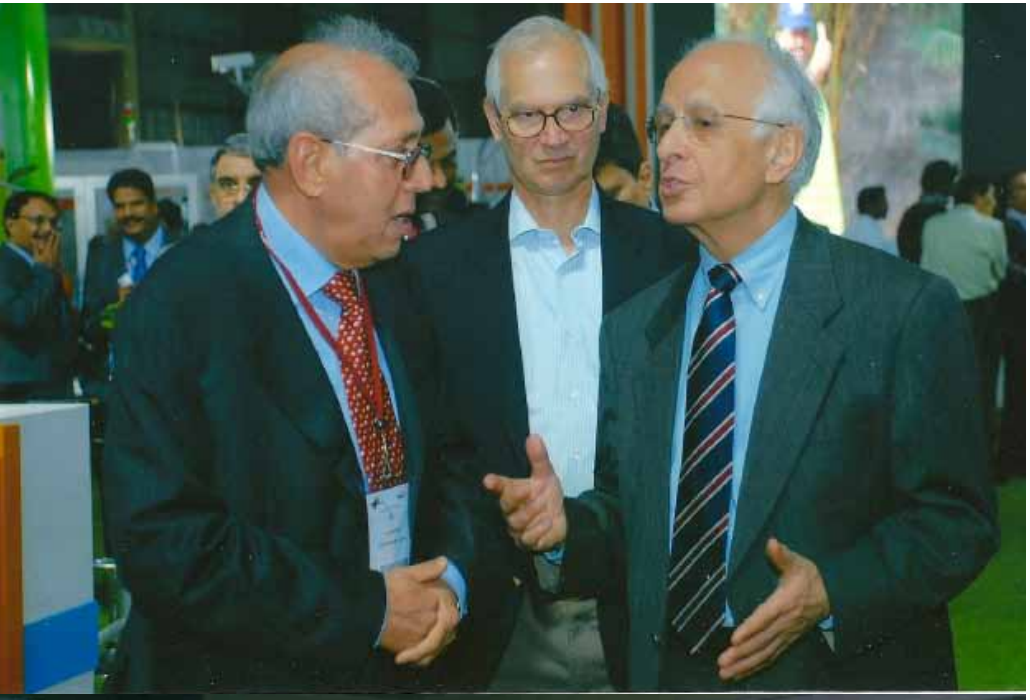
(Clockwise from left) Upon graduation; with wife Vijay and sons Vivek and Sanjay; driver Teja Singh, wife Vijay, son Sanjay, brother Vikas and mother Jamuna Devi with the first car, a Packard; standing second from right with maternal uncle Pandit Lakshmi Chand Magotra, brother Vikas, mother Jamuna Devi, and father Dina Nath Mishra.

(Clockwise from bottom left) The BFW building under construction; with the Kalinga Airlines colleagues; celebrating the birthday of son Sanjay; wife Vijay wins the Boeing Queen Crown.

(Clockwise from top left) Mother Jamuna Devi blesses grandson Sanjay on his wedding; flanked by sons Sanjay and Vivek; standing second from right with grand daughter Aarya, daughter-in-law Bineeta, son Sanjay, and wife Vijay; Bela, Vidushi and children with wife Vijay.

(Clockwise from left) With grand daughter Aarya; watching with Giridhar Dasji Kothari, JM Kothari and NN Upadhyay tree plantation by a guest; sharing a green treat with BFW directors Fleck, Hansen and Zweifel; wife Vijay with her brother Vipen and his wife Bela.

(Clockwise from top left) Holidaying with wife Vijay in Switzerland; being facilitated at Prerana Institute, a body caring for the visually handicapped; receiving citation from a German dignitary; a dignitary from Russia signs the visitor register as NN Upadhyay stands behind.



(Clockwise from top left) With industrialist Jamshyd Godrej and Member Planning Commission Arun Maira; receiving citation from Cabinet Minister Narayan Dutt Tiwari; being felicitated by Central Minister Ajit Singh; with industrialist Abhay Firodia, as Rohini Kalyani looks on.

(Clockwise from top left) Receiving citation from Cabinet Minister Dr Subramanian Swamy in the presence of Dr Montek Singh Ahluwalia; receiving award from the President of India R Venkataraman in the presence of Central Minister Priyaranjan Das Munshi; with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee as member of a delegation; receiving an award from Central Ministers P Chidambaram and Salman Khurshid.

Top: Receiving the Lifetime Contribution Award.

Bottom: Jointly inagurating a product with Dr Er Y Inaba, Chairman and Managing Director, Fanuc Corporation.





# Speaking About Mr SN Mishra

*Mr Viji Santhanam*
*Chairman, Sundaram Finance Limited*
*Managing Director, Brakes India Limited*
*Director, IIT Madras Research Park*

Mr Mishra has made immense contribution to the overall growth of the Indian machine tool industry as President of IMTMA (Indian Machine Tool Manufacturers' Association).

Mr SN Mishra has been instrumental in transforming BFW from a standard milling machine manufacturer to a manufacturer of modern high end machining centres, CNC SPMs, and transfer lines.

The growth of BFW under his stewardship has helped the Indian auto and auto component industries to increase productivity and stay competitive with innovative machining solutions.

Multinational companies like Honda, Suzuki, Ford, Toyota, etc., have been procuring CNC SPMs and CNC transfer lines from BFW instead of importing them. This goes to prove the technological advancement of BFW.

Brakes India is proud to have been associated with BFW since the middle of the seventies. Brakes India procures a number of SPMs, milling machines, and machining centres from BFW, and is quite satisfied with the quality, reliability and performance of the BFW products.

## *Mr R Dayal*

*Executive Director, Maruti Suzuki India Ltd*
*Director, Jay Bharat Maruti Ltd*
*Director, Caparo Maruti India Ltd*

I have known Shri Shail Mishra for the past eight years. I met him for the first time in 2004 during his regular visits to the customers. I subsequently met him on several occasions either at Gurgaon or in Bengaluru.





I always found him to be a great team builder full of passion and commitment.

Our company has been associated with him and BFW since the inception of Maruti Suzuki India Limited. BFW executed several critical projects for Maruti under the leadership of Mr Mishra. He strongly believes in building long-term relationships both at personal and at organisational levels, and does not confine to just supplying machinery. I can vividly recall how, on his own initiative, he deputed his team to Maruti for six months to ensure smooth production and ramp up after the commissioning of fully indigenised transmission case machining line which was supplied by BFW with a tight delivery schedule and stringent quality requirements.

Mr Mishra is always willing to take up new challenges and believes in working with the customers. He does not limit himself to being a supplier of machine tools but always thinks of providing solutions which are beneficial to the customers. On learning about the aging of machines which Maruti had installed at its inception, he promptly offered to take up upgradation of those machines, even though these were imported and not originally supplied by BFW. The fact that he offered a solution which was in the interest of his customer, instead of providing an easy solution of offering new machines which would have earned him much higher revenue, shows his commitment towards his customers.

His initiative not only enabled Maruti to avoid scrapping of the machines but also enhanced capabilities both at Maruti and BFW. Mr Mishra has great passion for environment. This is clearly visible with beautiful landscapes and gardens developed within the BFW premises. He loves to have a relaxing stroll with the customers on the beautiful gardens at BFW after serious business meetings. This gives an opportunity to share mutual insights on various aspects of life and things happening around us.

I would cherish continued association with him at personal and organisational level, and wish him all the best for the future.

## *Mr Erich Unger*

*Managing Director, matec Maschinenbau GmbH*

Let me just give you some ideas I got from meetings with Mr Mishra in the past and which deeply impressed me and gave me an impetus for my own thinking, or which were for me an example of his open-mindedness.

I remember one meeting where Mr Mishra tried to





convince me of selling the major share in matec to BFW. What he said to me was, "I am only employed at BFW as a President and Vice Chairman, whereas you are the Managing Director holding a share in the company - what a great chance of doing more out of this!"

What I believe as a great merit of Mr Mishra is that within BFW he created an island and a botanical garden in Bangalore. It is a brilliant idea to combine flowers, which means nature, with machine building.

From my own experience, for being a leader and to run your own business it is vital that you follow your conviction with heart and soul, and you love the job you are doing more than anything else. It is the greatest pleasure for me to see a machine doing the job I designed it for.

This is what is most inspiring for me, and I believe it is also Mr Mishra's inspiration.

## *Dr S Inaba*

*Founder and Honorary Chairman, Fanuc Corporation*

Mr Mishra has led BFW for thirty-four years

and developed it into the best Indian machine tool builder technologically as well as financially. I would like to express my respect for Mr Mishra's great achievement.

Mr Mishra has dedicated himself not only to the development of high-end machine tools but also to the development of the practical machine tools which are currently needed in the Indian market. His strong enthusiasm for machine tools is so impressive.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to Mr Mishra for the long-term relations we have had and wish him the best of health and further success.

## *Dr Y Inaba*

*Chairman and Managing Director, Fanuc Corporation*

I express my deep respect for Mr Mishra's leadership for these thirty-four years. Mr Mishra is a treasure not only for BFW but also for the entire Indian machine tool industry.

I wish Mr Mishra further success and best health for future.





## *Mr Vikram Kirloskar*

*Chairman & Managing Director, Kirloskar Systems Ltd*

I have always admired Shail. I first met him more than twenty years ago. He has built Bharat Fritz Werner from a small company into a world-class machine tool manufacturer through his long-term vision and a solid determination to make it happen. I have also admired his passion for the environment and have been lucky and happy to receive a beautiful sapling from the BFW nursery on every visit. I wish him and his family all the best.

## *Mr Günter Dorow*

*(Retd) General Technical Manager, BFW*

I assume I am one of the only few who have been with BFW from the very beginning. I will try to report from this time up to the time when the Kothari Group purchased Mr Mathulla's shares.

Mr Mathulla, then Chairman and Managing

Director of HMT, got permission from Prime Minister Nehru's office in 1961 to establish a joint venture for the production of machine tools to provide him with a regular income after his retirement. He started an ancillary unit of HMT in the name of his brother, Mr Thomas. This unit was equipped with five machine tools from HMT. The unit was run in co-operation with Fritz Werner AG Berlin.

In October 1961 Bharat Fritz Werner (Private) Ltd, or BFW, was registered. I was employed at Fritz Werner, Berlin, and had already worked at HMT for some years. I was sent to Bangalore in 1962 again, this time as a General Technical Manager to build up BFW.

I started with employing Mr Rangalingam Setty, the engineer who assisted me at HMT in designing a turret lathe. Our first tasks were the manufacture of some small components and the conversion of technical documents of Fritz Werner size 1 knee type milling machines in vertical, horizontal and universal versions.

Meanwhile, the factory building was coming up. When the building, except for the administration block, was ready, we faced a number of difficulties. For instance, there was no electricity! We installed a generator of limited capacity.

The first set of machines was installed in the begin-





ning of 1963. We operated all three shifts. Workers used a bus from HMT for their transport to town. One morning when I came to work, I found a scorpion on my desk! It was tied to a string, fixed under a paperweight. Alongside was a note, reading: We want our own transport. We have to walk over fields to HMT. There are snakes and scorpions on our way.

We had to buy our own bus!

Back then the Government treated public and private companies differently. For instance, we had to import gears from Fritz Werner, to avoid large investments for machines to produce them. After the death of Prime Minister Nehru, the secretary to the Government in the Ministry of Industries initiated investigations against Mr Mathulla for his dealings with BFW, a company in which Mr Mathulla had substantial holding.

In spite of having obtained the Government's permission for every action in respect of his unit, the bureaucrat was not convinced. A deputy secretary deputed to HMT failed to unearth any evidence to prove Mr Mathulla as guilty. Nevertheless, they believed that Mr Mathulla misused his position as chairman and managing director of HMT to set up his own factory.

Mr Mathulla went to the High Court and won the case. All this left a bitter feeling with Mr Mathulla. He did

not look after HMT any more, sold his interest in BFW to the Kothari Group, left India, and lived in Europe until he died of a heart attack in May 1972 in Geneva.

By then, BFW had become a very profitable concern with a bright image in the Indian market.

## *Mr Johannes F Trbola*

*Managing Director, TR & B GmbH + Co. KG*

I thank Mr Mishra for the inspirations and experiences during our co-operation. He is one of those leaders of the industry who have the inspiring force to motivate people to deliver more than they expect themselves to be able to.

I also have to thank God that he brought me in the position to meet Mr Mishra.





## *Ms Smita and Mr Hari*

*Rotarians*

I must congratulate Mr SN Mishra on a lifetime of great achievement at BFW. I am sure that what BFW is today must give him a great sense of pride and satisfaction on an extraordinary journey.

## *Mr Helmut Hammer*

*Managing Director (Retired), Fritz Werner*

Mr SN Mishra and I spent an exciting time together. My mind is full of good memories. I feel grateful for our close partnership and respectful friendship. BFW has been Mr Mishra's baby from the very beginning till now and also in future. This relationship is not a question of contract but of spirit. GD (Mr Giridhar Das Kothari) had been, and surely his successors will also be, most respectable, honourable, and generous owners. But to manage a company is a different task from owning it. To have Mr Mishra in this position for more than 30 years was lucky for the owners, the employees, and the company in total. Nobody can understand this better than me.

## *Mr T Parabrahman*

*Managing Director (Retired)*
*Kirloskar Toyota Textile Machinery*

I cannot imagine BFW and the machine tool industry of India without Mr SN Mishra being at the helm. I recollect my career at BFW and the continued relationship thereafter. There are no words or measurement for the gratitude I have for Mr Mishra for his teachings and guidance.

Both my late parents had always a very special place for him. Mrs Vijaya Mishra and Mr Mishra have been the most wonderful couple of Bangalore.

## *Mr C Vinod Hayagriv*

*Managing Director, C Krishniah Chetty & Sons*

Mr SN Mishra really deserves the retirement after such a long working life and a very successful career. May God bless him with health, peace and good life in the years ahead.





## *Mr Kapil Grover*

*Chairman, Hindustan Export & Import*

I really cannot think of BFW without Mr SN Mishra, under whose able guidance and leadership, BFW rose to un-paralleled heights.

I have greatly appreciated his guidance in the past, but more importantly his warmth and friendship.

## *Mr Venkat Kedlaya*

*Managing Director, Convergent Communications*

Mr SN Mishra's leadership was crucial to make BFW what it is today. We look upon senior leaders like him at this crucial time.

## *Mr V Chandrasekhar*

*Chairman, Bhoruka Power Corporation*

It has always been a pleasure being associated with Mr SN Mishra in whatever capacity. His keen observations, patience and words of encouragement have always been of great value.

## *Mr Samrat Guha*

*Vice President, Head -Van Gogh Preferred Banking*

Relationship with BFW has been and will always be fruitful and enriching for us. I offer our heart-filled gratitude for his continued patronage and guidance. Mr Mishra's presence will always be missed in my further discussions. Looking forward to continued mentoring and the guidance in future as well.





## *Mr MG Srinivas*

*Senior Director*
*Indian Machine Tool Manufacturers' Association*

Personally for me and to IMTMA, Mr SN Mishra has been a pillar of great strength and support. While we will continue to count on his blessings, on a more emotional note, we will sadly miss Mr Mishra for the regular industry interactions and forums.

## *Mr AK Jain*

*Executive Director – PP, Ashok Leyland*

I appreciate Mr SN Mishra's leadership and statesmanship while leading BFW to new heights.

## *Mr Takako Ikeda*

*International Sales Department, THK*

THK learned a lot from BFW, and is very happy to see the impressive growth of BFW.

## *Mr Kartik Sriram*

*President and CEO, Rapsri Engineering Industries*

I recollect with fondness every meeting I had with Mr SN Mishra - though there haven't been many. I am also grateful for his constant support to the Bangalore Kidney Foundation.





## *Mr I Sen*

*Managing Director*
*International Combustion (India) Ltd.*

Mr SN Mishra has led BFW's transformation from humble beginnings to the current position of being one of the leaders of the machine tool industry in India.

I, on my part, have been honoured to have had a wonderful opportunity of knowing Mr Mishra professionally, and thank him for his support. He has always been a good friend whom I cherish, and I am sure, will continue to cherish in the years to come.

## *Mr Ashok Saxena*

*Director, UK Advanced Engineering Office*

I recall Mr SN Mishra's great enthusiasm for BFW to diversify in aerospace, a sunrise futuristic industry of India. It speaks volume about his visionary leadership.

I always enjoyed thoroughly our professional interactions.

## *Mr Vivek N Joshi*

*Associate Director, Kotak Investment Advisors Ltd*

The Life Time Award demonstrates that Mr SN Mishra's career has been an illustrious one. I enjoyed our interactions on various topics.

I wish him good health, prosperity and all success as he writes the next chapter in his life.

## *Mr Sunil Bhumralkar*

*Partner, SR Batliboi & Co*

It was a privilege to work with Mr SN Mishra. I greatly cherish our association which began in 1990/91.





## *Dr Sriram P*

*Jt Managing Director, Rapsri Engineering Industries*

I cherish my personal association with Mr SN Mishra, and through him, with BFW. BFW, today, is a great name in machine tools. Mr Mishra's contribution to BFW and the Indian machine tool industry is phenomenal. I cannot imagine BFW without his presence. The ambience inside and outside the BFW plant is a testimonial to his foresight.

## *Mr Jayarama Bhat*

*Associate Vice President*
*Kirloskar Toyota Textile Machinery*

KTTM was privileged to have Mr SN Mishra at the top management position in BFW, giving complete support to our requirements time and again.

With Mr Mishra' kind guidance and advice to the BFW staff, we were able to reap complete benefits in our business relationship with BFW.

Mr SN Mishra is the guiding spirit of BFW. He built a strong technical team which produced world class products, and continues to challenge many global machine tool makers.

## *Mr Dayanand G Netalkar*

*Partner, Netalkar Engineering Works*

I am proud to mention that we have been growing with Mr SN Mishra and his organisation's support.

## *Mr CP Rangachar*

*Managing Director, Yuken India*

That BFW's fortunes rose from ₹1.50 crores to ₹800 crores, without fresh capital infusion speaks volumes about Mr SN Mishra's leadership. The Award conferred on him was so well deserved. It was indeed our pleasure to have been associated with him.





## *Mr Venu Srinivasan*

*Chairman and Managing Director*
*Sundaram Clayton Ltd*
*TVS Motor Company*

I thank Mr SN Mishra for the support we received from BFW under his leadership. Through his untiring contributions, Mr Mishra laid strong foundations for a better future for the manufacturing industry in the country.

## *Mr Umesh N*

*Plant Manager NhP*
*Industrial Equipment Division, Bosch Limited*

Mr SN Mishra is a doyen of the machine tool Industry. We had the opportunity to learn a lot from him. His contribution to IMTMA is there for everyone to see.

## *Mr N Ahmedali*

*Managing Director, HR Cornucopia*

Mr SN Mishra has been a symbol of energy and commitment to many. He has been the architect of BFW's growth; and he and his family must feel happy and proud to have built an organisation that has been so successful and at the same time so humane.

## *Mr Gaurav Sahgal*

*Regional Director*
*Hongkong & Shanghai Banking Corporation*

I thank Mr SN Mishra for his continuous guidance during our interaction.





## *Mr TR Parasuraman*

*Sr Vice President, Toyota Kirloskar Auto Parts*

Mr SN Mishra has been a great visionary in the growth of the machine tool industry and his contribution to BFW has been commendable. I congratulate him on shaping up a great company.

## *Mr Srinjoy Das*

*Deputy Director*
*Indian Machine Tool Manufacturers' Association*

Mr SN Mishra has been one of the most formidable guiding mentors of the Indian machine tool industry, and more specifically for the Association over the last four decades. He has been a tremendous source of strength for the industry, IMTMA and its Executive Committee, and we have always looked upon to having his encouragement, guidance and effervescent support in all initiatives of the industry and the Association.

Mr Mishra's personal contribution to the shaping of the 'VISION' for the industry has been outstandingly enor-

mous.

I have had the unique privilege of working under Mr Mishra's leadership on a wide range of Association initiatives since my joining the Secretariat in 1995.

## *Mr AY Khirapate*

*Vice President - Production Engg*
*Force Motors Limited*

It was indeed a great pleasure in interacting with Mr SN Mishra during our long association with BFW.

With consistent support from the BFW team under Mr Mishra's leadership and guidance, we were able to implement latest technology machines in the Group Companies of the Firodia Enterprise.

## *Dr Thomas R Klötzel*

*Thummel, Scutze & Partner*

It has always been an illuminating interaction





with Mr SN Mishra on the professional level which I shall miss. I vividly remember our first lunch with Mr Upadhyay at BFW's canteen in Bangalore. The magnificent Kaanchan Tejas celebrations were giving me a remarkable insight into the BFW-family, of which I have been given the privilege to be a member. I am sure that Mr Mishra's spirits, convictions and visions will continue to flourish at BFW.

A smile comes to my face when I think of Mr Mishra and his wife starting the new chapter of his life at Villa No. 33. 33 is a lucky number for all purposes. And I am very happy for our warm friendship. As it is written in "The Kural" (783):

*Good friends are like good books - a perpetual delight.*

# The Citation

*Leveraging his mastery in handling complex situations, Mr. Shailendra Nath Mishra transformed an old world, brick and mortar machine tool producer into a modern, nimble footed, Global corporation that is a market leader in India. Shail, to his colleagues & friends, mobilised his financial expertise and managerial strengths to place BFW on growth trajectory with an enviable record of sustained profitability.*

*In his over forty-five year long association with BFW, Shail Mishra oversaw several milestones. Making BFW a wholly Indian owned company, setting an Industry trend by recording highest-ever exports to Russia, overcoming crippling labour strife, developing a wide range of products (265 models), acquiring companies abroad; Shail Mishra now dreams of a 'Bottom of the Pyramid' machine tool for the 'Aam Aadmi' of the industrial*





*world.*

*Shail Mishra is a prolific reader and a scholar on Indian Puranas. He can quote with ease and alacrity from Bhagwat Gita, Ram Charit Manas and Mahabahrata. His interest in literature spans from Shakespeare to Tulsidas, Mirza Ghalib to Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, and Ernst Hemingway to Arabian Nights, all of whom he can recite word by word. More importantly, Shail Mishra embodies the rare quality of applying principles of these epics to address complex issues of managing an enterprise in the modern world. While talking about environment is in fashion today, Shail Mishra has been walking the talk for decades. His initiatives in this regard have brought kudos to BFW from the corporate world and the civil society alike.*

*Shail Mishra hails from an illustrious family. Father Dina Nath Mishra epitomised perfection, Mother Jamuna Devi personified faith and wife Vijay redefines divinity and social justice. His two sons occupy high positions in global corporations. The aura of knowledge and vibrations of divinity are palpable in the Mishra household.*

*During his Presidentship of IMTMA (1992 – 1994), the Association received a new impetus. He pursued Industry's interests with vigour and launched several new initiatives that are visible even today as foundations of an Industry Association in post liberalisation era. He*

*put Association's finances in great shape, was an astute crisis manager, inculcated the style of consensus building and popularised the Strategic Importance of India's Machine Tool Industry. Combining principals of 'Rajniti' and the fundamentals of 'Arthashastra', Shail Mishra is akin to IMTMA's 'Chanakya', often referred as India's Machiavelli. Shail Mishra continues to actively support IMTMA in all its endeavours.*

*In recognition of his sustained business leadership and significant contribution to the Association, we have great pleasure in conferring upon Shail Mishra the 'IMTMA-BFW Lifetime Contribution Award instituted in the memory of the Late Shri HR Gupta.*

IMTMA – BFW Lifetime Contribution Award 2013
in Memory of Late H R Gupta
Awarded to
Mr S N Mishra
For his distinguished contribution to the Indian machine tool industry